

Message Text

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12

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MILI, JA

SUBJ: NEW LDP DIETMEN'S LEAGUE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE

SUMMARY: THE LDP DIETMEN'S LEAGUE TO STUDY NATIONAL DEFENSE PROBLEMS ESTABLISHED IN LATE DECEMBER IS NOT EXPECTED TO HAVE MUCH IMPACT ON JAPAN'S DEFENSE POLICIES. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO RECENT PRESS REPORTS, EIGHTY LDP DIET MEMBERS IN LATE DECEMBER ORGANIZED A NEW "DIETMEN'S LEAGUE TO STUDY NATIONAL DEFENSE PROBLEMS" TO DEVELOP A PARTY CONSENSUS ON DEFENSE MATTERS. THE PRESS SAID THAT THE LDP IS SHARPLY DIVIDED ON DEFENSE ISSUES BETWEEN PARTY "HAWKS" AND "DOVES", AND THAT THE LEAGUE WAS FORMED AS A RESULT OF ARGUMENTS ON JAPAN'S NON-NUCLEAR POLICY, WHICH WERE RENEWED BY THE LAROCQUE TESTIMONY IN THE US CONGRESS. ASAO MIHARA, FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER (IN THE RECENT "ONE-MONTH" TANAKA CABINET) AND FORMER JDA PARLIAMENTARY VICE MINISTER, WAS NAMED LEAGUE CHAIRMAN.

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2. VARIOUS LDP SOURCES QUERIED BY THE EMBASSY PLAYED DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED NEW GROUP. THEY TOLD US THAT IT WAS FORMED AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE JDA LEADERSHIP PRIMARILY TO COUNTER FLAGGING LDP DIET AND PUBLIC INTEREST IN DEFENSE MATTERS IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC CONCERNS, AND TO BUILD UP SUPPORT FOR THE DEFENSE BUDGET. ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, THE LEAGUE IS NOT DESIGNED TO SUPPLANT THE FORMAL LDP POLICY-STUDY GROUPS, SUCH AS THE NATIONAL DEFENSE GROUP (KOKUBO BUKAI) HEADED BY MINORU GENDA, OR THE SECURITY TREATY RESEARCH COUNCIL. THE LEAGUE IS AN INFORMAL STUDY GROUP MADE UP OF JUNIOR AND MIDDLE-RANKING DIETMEN WHO DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH SENIORITY TO QUALIFY FOR THE GENDA GROUP OR THE RESEARCH COUNCIL.

3. ACCORDING TO A KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE, THE LEAGUE MAY COME OUT WITH MORE "DOVISH" POSITIONS THAN THE GENDA GROUP SIMPLY BECAUSE THE LATTER HAS ALMOST INVARIABLY BEEN ADOPTING POSITIONS FARTHER TO THE RIGHT OF THOSE OF THE LDP MAINSTREAM. THE LARGE SIZE OF THE LEAGUE (ACTUALLY 67, INCLUDING PROXY MEMBERS) IS NOT INDICATIVE OF THE DIETMEN'S CONCERN OVER DEFENSE ISSUES, ACCORDING TO ANOTHER SOURCE. IT IS DUE TO THE HOPE OF MANY OF THE MEMBERS TO GAIN THE POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THE JSDF CONSTITUENCY IN COMING ELECTIONS. THE LEAGUE MEMBERS ALSO REPORTEDLY WANT SOME SAY IN THE CHOICE OF FUTURE JDA DIRECTORS GENERAL, I.E. SELECTION FROM AMONG LEAGUE MEMBERS. MIHARA WAS RECOMMENDED BY JDA TO HEAD THE GROUP BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN RENDERING YEOMAN SERVICE FOR THE JDA AS A MEMBER OF THE LOWER HOUSE CABINET AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (WHICH HANDLES DEFENSE).

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO TELL, OBSERVERS BELIEVE, AND WE AGREE, THAT THE LEAGUE MAY NOT HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE, AND JAPAN'S DEFENSE POLICIES WOULD NOT CHANGE SUBSTANTIALLY BECAUSE OF IT.
HODGSON

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